

MSFS - MISSIONARIES OF ST.FRANCIS DE SALES
SOUTH-WEST INDIA PROVINCE



**VINAYALAYA, MSFS Provincial House P.B.No.5557, Malleswaram West P.O
Bengaluru 560 055, INDIA**

Tel. 080 23340379 Mob: 91 9739010026, Fax: 080 23341329

E-mail:provincialsouthwestmsfs@gmail.com **Website:**www.msfsouthwest.com
secretaryprovincialsouthwest@gmail.com

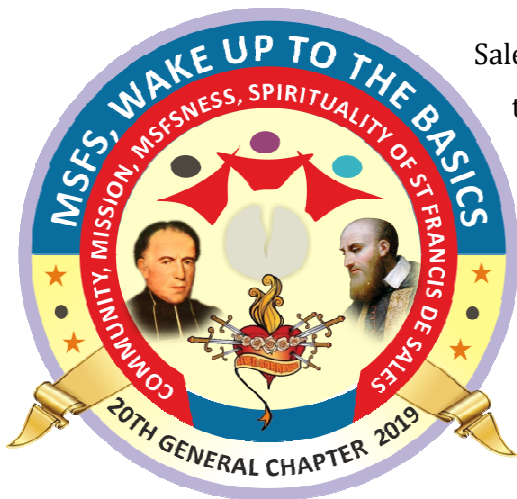
SWIP Circular BK/39

January 31, 2019

My dear Confreres,

Fraternal greetings to you from Fr. Benny Koottanal. As we are at the wake of the XXth General Chapter, we are expected to enter into a new level of existence through the guidance of the Holy Spirit in and through this Chapter. Let us specially pray for the success of the Chapter that all of us as one religious family be animated through the guidance of the Holy Spirit. We had been discussing in the past three circulars about the Four Pillars of our Charism. In this circular we shall discuss on the fourth pillar of our Charism.

MSFS, Wake Up To Our Spiritual Heritage: Salesian Spirituality



Salesian Spirituality has helped many people over the centuries to live a meaningful and fulfilling life. St. Francis de Sales presents a spirituality for everyone, no matter what their station in life is. We live in a culture of violence, characterized by hopelessness, passing relationships, temporary gratification, expedient solutions to difficult problems and shallow answers to questions. In this situation, the

wisdom of St. Francis de Sales becomes a beacon for those in search of God.

Various virtues lived and proposed by our Patron through his voluminous writings are unparalleled through the ages. The Spiritual Classics of St. Francis de Sales **Treatise on the Love of God** and **Introduction to the Devout Life** stand as priceless witnesses to the depth of Salesian Spirituality. The Spiritual Conferences of St. Francis de Sales as well as countless number of his Letters to his numerous Spiritual Sons and Daughters evince the impact of Salesian Spirituality.

Experiencing the depth and value of the Salesian Spirituality numerous religious congregations (both men and women) as well as Clerical and Secular Orders follow the spirit of Salesian Spirituality throughout the world. All these only show forth the greatness of our Patron who interpreted life both from Divine and Human dimensions. The Spirituality of the Heart, the concept of “Live Jesus”, the Spirituality of Relationality, the Spirituality of “being in the Midst” and Fidelity to little things are only some of the sterling contributions of Salesian Spirituality.

My dear Confreres, hundred and eighty years after the foundation of our Congregation, all of us have a double responsibility. First of all, we need to imbibe and integrate Salesian Spirituality in our lives. Constant reading of the teaching of our patron will make us unto his likeness. Secondly, we have an equal responsibility to spread Salesian spirituality through our community life by effective participation in community living through regular participation in common prayers, meals, recreation and above all through our Salesian Hospitality. **We are expected to exuberate Salesian Virtues also through our ministries,** especially in pastoral, social and education ministries.

Various are the opportunities offered to us through our own province to improve the quality of our Salesian life-style. **Plenty of Salesian Literatures are published through SFS Publications; every year we conduct Salesian Seminars and Salesian Retreats.** I welcome you whole-heartedly to participate in these events and enrich ourselves with Salesian Spirituality. I invite you to evaluate and decide over the following points:

- a) Have I read at least once the Spiritual Classics of St. Francis de Sales: “Treatise on the Love of God” and “Introduction to the Devout Life?”
- b) In my community do we have a Salesian Corner, where all the books of/about St. Francis de Sales are placed?

- c) Do I make use of the opportunities of participating in Salesian Seminars and Salesian Retreats?
- d) Do I speak about St. Francis de Sales and his Spirituality in the places of my ministry?

My dear Confreres, imbibing the Spirit and Spirituality of St. Francis de Sales through these four pillars of our Charism let us effectively participate in the General Chapter and thus define the future of our Congregation. God bless MSFS!

My Message to the Province on the Day of My Installation as the Provincial for the Second Term

Beloved Archbishop Peter Machado, Beloved Provincials, Respected Fathers, Brothers, Sisters, above all, my Beloved Confreres of the MSFS Congregation, As I stand at the threshold of a second term of my office as the provincial I realistically view that three years of the office of a Provincial is not a long time, especially in the history of a Congregation like MSFS with the backing of the legacy close to two hundred years. But I am equally aware that the journey continued in these three years between 2016 and 2019, together with 227 priests and equal number of seminarians in the South West India Province of the MSFS will not be deleted from the history. It will be ever remembered for its impacts both positive and negative. I reckon with clarity, my dear Confreres, that in our journey as a province family of the MSFS during the last three years we have travelled with a goal ahead. Time and again through various forums we made our goals clarified. In uncertain moments of the journey we equally panged and gasped. Some of us, including me, felt that we are not on the right track. There had been conflicts of opinions but not a break up; there had been clashes between subjective convictions and objective truths but not at the cost of religious commitments; there had been incidents that grieved us so badly through unexpected death and sicknesses of our confreres, but never losing the interior joy of our consecration.

My dear Confreres, my intention today is not to declare before you the list of my achievements as provincial but painfully to check with you whether we are on the right track. The journey of our province during the last three years had been highlighted with a foundational theme: **Be a Disciple first, then an Apostle**. Starting with the provincial chapter, down through my interactions with each one of you, we were reminding ourselves that we are not master builders but we are mere labourers in the field of the

master. I am convinced today that our apostolic activities as well-educated, highly qualified and systematically organized enterprisers will not make a religious impact in the modern world. But when these qualities and qualifications are mingled together with the “Smell of the Chief Shepherd and his Sheep” we will realize that we are instruments in the hands of God. This had been my goal: **The Missionaries of St. Francis de Sales should be a praying Community of Confreres engaged joyfully in the Mission of the Lord.**

I am reminded of the General Audience given by Pope Paul VI on February 12 in the year 1969. In this audience Paul VI, referring to the Greek mythology, let words of *autoresre* sound: “Tell me, Euthydemus, have you ever been to Delphi?” “Yes, certainly; twice.” “Then did you notice somewhere on the temple the inscription ‘Know thyself?’” “I did.” “And did you pay no heed to the inscription, or did you attend to it and try to consider who you were?” “Indeed I did not, because I felt sure that I knew that already”. Then the Pope continues: it is from here that the story of the great problem regarding human’s awareness of himself begins. The activism of today and the prevalence of sensitive knowledge and social communications about speculative study and inner work make us tributaries of the outside world and greatly diminishes personal reflection and knowledge of the questions that are inherent to our subjective lives. We are distracted, empty of ourselves and full of images and thoughts that do not necessarily regard us intimately.”

My dear Confreres, I am very proud of the apostolic and missionary strides that we have made during the last three years. We made systematic progress in our Formation programs through effective vocation promotions and accompanied formation; we are blessed with an average number of 6-8 ordinations every year; we have taken extra efforts to make our educational institutions full-fledged and thus provide quality education to more than 30,000 students, especially providing scholarship and admissions to Christian and needy children whom we are catering through the province; we have initiated good number of social work programs throughout our province especially catering to the empowerment of women and children; we stood by people in their saddest moments by constructing 15 houses for the flood affected people in Kerala and Kodagu and renovating at least 20 houses; we have equally endeared ourselves to the people of God by taking up new mission territories in Gulbarga, Shimoga and Chikmagalur and in Chad and Cameroon and the Philippines and constructing Churches

in poor parishes. Yes, we are here to go forth as missionaries of St. Francis de Sales, just as he did in Chablais; but remember, 'just as he did' – with the Cross and the Bible in the hands.

On a personal note, there had been constant questions to me during my term of office as the Provincial by friends and well-wishers, whether I am struggling under the office, whether I am worn out. I must honestly tell you, my dear Confreres, with you I enjoyed my office. Not because of the power and influence it offered, but because of the warmth and strength you gave me. You pointed to me my insensitivity through your goodness, you exposed to me my pride through your innocence, you challenged my luxury through your simplicity. **You have touched me and I have grown.** Two specific areas that I would like to highlight of my confreres are: first, **the complete sense of obedience** – you have listened attentively and acted on what you listened, even when it was difficult; second, **your commitment to the entrusted responsibility.** I am proud of the way you showed passion for the apostolate. We were able to cross the barriers just because you set the goals high and acted on it. You had been credible, respectful and available. Let us thank God for the road that we travelled together holding His hand, the hand of the Master-Builder.

My dear Confreres, together with you as I begin the new term of my office as your animator, I have my visions and dreams as well as my fears and anxieties. **I dream of a South West India Province of the MSFS that is integrated in its Charism and Apostolate.** The greatest danger that we are facing today is overloaded occupation with activities without taking time to know why we do them. I would like to turn your attention to the Theme of the XXth General Chapter of our Congregation which will commence from 1st of February to the 13th of February 2019: **MSFS WAKE UP TO THE BASICS.** The Basics of our Way of life is the identity that is given to us through our Charism. And the Four Pillars of our Charism are: Consecrated Life in Community, Mission, MSFSness and Salesian Spirituality. These are different from our Apostolate such as overseas mission, education and formation of the young and renewal of Christian Life. My dear Confreres, have we forgotten our Charism? **Charism of a Congregation is the identity of its members that shows forth who the person is or the qualities of the person or the group that makes them different from others.** Are we clear about this identity? Do we value sufficient enough our community life and its intricacies? Are we taking up the Mission of Christ as lived by St. Francis de Sales and

our Founder Fr. Mermier? Are we able to show forth our identity as MSFS by specifically living certain virtues which St. Francis de Sales upheld? Are we effective enough to teach the wisdom of Salesian Literature by studying St. Francis de Sales daily? When there is a dearth in these ingredients of our life, we are bound to have identity crisis. The cause behind most of our lukewarmness, distractions and indifference, murmuring and negative criticism is the ignorance of the Basics and the unwillingness to uphold it. **MSFS – Wake Up to the Basics:** The General Chapter invites us to raise a fundamental question against ourselves: **Are we Charism Oriented or Ministry oriented?** We need to be MSFS who are Charism Oriented – ministry will automatically follow.

In the recent times there is an inspiring video being circulated popularly in the Social media. It is the video of a homily preached by an Archbishop, possibly in Vietnam, during the ordination of four of his priests. In this homily, the bishop asks the Ordinantis, **Are you weak enough to be a priest? Are you afraid enough to be a priest? Are you broken enough to be a priest?** You should know your emotional, sexual, physical, psychological and moral weaknesses. If only you are able to realize your own weakness you will be able to realize the greatness of your master who can make you strong, saying: My grace is sufficient for you. **Are you afraid enough to be a Priest?** You should be afraid to fall into the temptations of luxury and consumerism, you should be afraid to steal the money of the people, you should be afraid to humiliate and black mail your fellow men, you should be afraid to be linguistic and regionalistic, you should be afraid of hypocrisy, you must be afraid of sin, lust, celebrating mass in sacrilege, lying, comfort-seeking, convenience-oriented – yes, you should be afraid that your master can tell you: My grace is sufficient for you. **Are you broken enough to be a priest?** When you lift up the broken body of Christ in the Eucharist, you should be first broken in your ego, in your self-centeredness, in your privacies – yes, are you willing to be crushed with him whom you are breaking in the Eucharist? Only when you are willing to break yourself, your master can tell you: My grace is sufficient for you. There is no holiness without participating in the breaking of the body of the Lord.

My dear Confreres, I visualize and dream the future of our Province with you by clinging on to the basics of our Congregation, our Charism and our Identity. Today I am no more worried about the financial crisis; we will be somehow taken care through the goodness of others, strategic planning of the Administration, astuteness of the Administrator and the hard work of our missionaries – but, I am afraid about our

ministries that are more and more money-oriented. I am no more worried about the future of our missions in the Chad-Cameroon and Philippines Delegations - but I am really afraid whether the local vocations that we are getting from those regions are imbibing the missionary spirit of our charism? I am not worried about the apostolates in the field of education, innovative and social ministries and pastoral ministries - but I am seriously afraid whether we are doing it for the Lord and His mission. **MSFS, Wake up to the Basics.** Together with you I would like to lead this province to the foundational Charism Based Apostolate and Missionary Dynamism.

My dear Confreres, if something should rightly disturb and trouble our consciences, it is the fact that so many of our brothers and sisters are living without the strength, light and consolation born of friendship with Jesus Christ, without a community of faith to support them, without meaning and a goal in life. More than by the fear of going astray, my hope is that we will be moved by the fear of remaining shut up within structures which give us a false sense of security, within rules which make us harsh judges, within habits which make us feel safe, while at our door people are starving (Pope Francis, *Joy of the Gospel*, No. 49). **Let us return to the Basics.**

May the Lord surprise us yet again in the coming three years through our new beginning. **MSFS, Wake up to the Basics.** Live Jesus.

Silver Jubilee of the Koppal Mission



Jubilee is looking back and looking forward. According to the spirit of Jubilee seen in the book of Leviticus (25:8-28) it is an occasion of remembrance of the past events; of

repentance for the faults committed; of redemption of what is lost; of return to the spirit of the founder, to the family; of rejoicing for the graces received; of reception of the freedom of the children of God, of recognition of God's mercy towards his people and of re-dedication looking forward for making 'the Kingdom of God at hand' (Mk.1:16).

With immense joy and thanksgiving we celebrated 25 years of the birth of MSFS Mission at Koppal which took place on 27th January 2019, at a Solemn Eucharistic celebration presided over by Bishop Henry D'Souza , Bishop of Bellary, and concelebrated by Very Rev. Fr. Benny Koottanal, Provincial, South West India Province, Rev. Fr. Thomas Cherukat, Former Provincial, South west India Province, Former Parish Priests, Diocesan Priests and many other confreres.

Bishop Henry was in full appreciation for service and the commendable works of the MSFS missionaries' at Koppal right from the inception of the mission.

Rev. Fr. Benny Koottanal, the Provincial Superior, recalled the struggles and difficulties the Missionaries went through with single minded devotion and dedication.

Rev. Fr. Thomas Cherukat, the First provincial of South West India province, expressed, how God accompanied in the journey of MSFS at Koppal to reach 25 Silver years. He acknowledged the co-op operation, support and guidance given by then late Rev. Dr. Joseph D' Silva, Bishop of Bellary. He also placed on record the pioneering works done by Rev. Fr. Sebastian Conrad.

Fr. Sebastian Conrad recalled that the Silver Sands of the past 25 years, glistened with moments of glory and happiness along with the struggles, commitment and support of the MSFS Community and parishioners, who worked tirelessly to make this dream a reality. He also took us down memory lane where we had our humble beginnings. He recalled the difficulties the founding priests and the parishioners had to face at that time and how we came out as winners with this beautiful church, standing as a witness to the hard work and generosity of many.

I sincerely thank Fr. Sebastian Conrad the Superior and the community of Koppal for organizing the Jubilee Celebrations of the Koppal Mission.

Appointments:

- **Fr. Sebastian Vellaramkunel** is appointed to the Community of Charis Bhavan with effect from February 20, 2019.
- **Fr. Noby Kottuppallil** is appointed temporarily to the Community of SFS Seminary, Ettumanoor for Vocation Promotion with effect from February 05, 2019.
- **Fr. Justin Panachickal** is appointed temporarily to the Community of Ulickal for Vocation Promotion with effect from February 17, 2019.
- **Fr. Staney Rodrigues** is designated to the Diocese of Shimogga with effect from February 01, 2019.
- **Fr. Joshy N. George Thumpechirayil** is designated to the Archdiocese of Changanacherry with effect from February 01, 2019.
- **Fr. Tony Thomas Munduchalil** is designated to the Diocese of Kanjirapally with effect from February 13, 2019.
- **Fr. Zacharias Peter** is designated to the Archdiocese of Thrichur with effect from February 01, 2019.
- **Fr. Antony Selvam** is designated to the Diocese of Gulberga with effect from February 15, 2019.
- **Fr. Rakesh Ekka** is designated to the Diocese of Gulberga with effect from February 15, 2019.
- **Fr. Petrus Kerketta** is appointed Assistant Parish Priest of St. Xavier's Church, Gokunte in the Archdiocese of Bangalore with effect from February 10, 2019.

Obituary



Fr. Abraham Puthuserry MSFS of South-West India Province (74) died on January 29, 2019.

My Schedule

My dear Confreres, please do take note of the schedule of my program. Different from the previous circular, each new circular would bring in additional changes in my programs as per the need. Please do organize the visitation and other common meetings/programs according to the latest communication.

February 2019

February 1-14	20 th General Chapter of MSFS in Guwahati
February 17	Parish Feast of Malur – Festal Mass
February 18	Diaconate Ordination, Tejas
February 19	Council Meeting
February 20	*Meeting the third year Seminarians of Sannidhi, Mysore *Apostolic Community Meeting of Mysore Apostolic Community
February 23	*Meeting the third year Seminarians of SFS Seminary, Ettumanoor
February 25	Apostolic Community Meeting of Trivandrum Apostolic Community
February 26	* Executive Meeting of the PMP (Parish Mission Preaching Team) * Executive meeting of VikasJyothi (in the afternoon)
February 27	* Meeting of all the Directors of Prateeksha Boys' Homes * Executive Meeting of PSI (in the afternoon)
February 28	Core Committee Meeting of the Formation Forum

March 2019

March 2	Suvidya-Tejas Academic Convocation in Suvidya College
March 4	Core-Committee Meeting of the Associates of the Fransalians
March 5	Core-Committee Meeting of the Mission Forum
March 6	Core-Committee Meeting of the Education Forum
March 7	* Executive Meeting of Fides India * Core-Committee Meeting of the Innovative & Social Ministry Forum (in the afternoon)

March 8	* Core-Committee Meeting of the Stewardship Forum * Meeting of the Internal Auditing Team (in the afternoon)
March 12	Council Meeting
March 14	One day with Tejas Community

Voice of SFS

“We must fear God through love, not love him through fear.”

Fraternally,



Fr. Benny Koottanal MSFS

Provincial